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ABSTRACT

This analysis of selected diffusion and dissemination methods used by developer-demonstrator projects in the National Diffusion Network discusses strategies under the following headings: managing the project, developing materials, disseminating information, conducting awareness sessions, training personnel, using certified trainers, providing technical assistance and follow-up activities, adopting and adapting processes, and questionable practices. A summary of successful and unsuccessful strategies is provided. (FM)

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SELECTED DISSEMINATION/DIFFUSION STRATEGIES

by

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The following information represents an analysis of selected dissemination/diffusion strategies used by developer-demonstrator (D/D) projects in the National Diffusion Network (NDN). Final reports submitted by the Project Directors for the fiscal year 1979 (School year 1978-79) were used in this analysis.

The dissemination strategies are listed under the following headings:

A. Managing the project

B. Developing materials

C. Disseminating information

D. Conducting awareness sessions

E. Training personnel

F. Using Certified Trainers

G. Providing technical assistance/follow-up activities

H. Adopting/adapting process

I. Questionable practices

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Under each heading, statements can be found which synthesize a specific strategy. You will find also that some strategies contradict others. Some of the statements raise issues, others present problems. At the end of the analysis, a summary of Successful and Unsuccessful Dissemination/Diffusion Strategies is provided.

A. Managing the Project

1. Provide adequate advance planning.

2. Spend adequate time in organizing strategies and planning specific activities. Cost out each major activity in terms of time and money- evaluate process.

3. Combine efforts of both DD_5 and SF_4 in network operations. Keep communications open among everyone involved directly.

4. Use feedback from project personnel to make changes in program operations.

5. Limit operations within resources available. Use the following ideas to prevent "burnt-out" of personnel.

   a) Say no to requests when overscheduling is imminent
   b) Rely on qualified trainers
   c) Better utilization of staff
   d) Use letters, phones, and group meetings

6. Do not limit operations, accept as many conferences as possible, keep reasonable data, help as many school districts as possible, provide all the inservice as possible, encourage best adopters to become certified trainers. Limiting adoptions would provide staff time to get statistical data; but it very likely would not increase either the quality of the adoptions or the sincerety of the adoptions.

7. As program develops high quality adopters, strive to become a manager of the process and use qualified certified trainers and demonstration sites in strategic geographic locations. Caution: Maintain quality of program verified with participant impact data.

8. Tap other sources of funds for continued development work, for example to further test, to expand into other grades, and to make major revisions.

9. Combine several stops into one trip to a particular State.

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B. Developing Materials

1. Develop a "standard" awareness package to provide a broad overview of the project.

2. Develop secondary awareness materials for districts requesting more in-depth information, include information on how to adopt the program.

3. Develop a slide/tape presentation. Include overview, history and basic concepts. Use NDN logo where appropriate.

4. Develop one-half hour color video tape cassette on participants in program.

5. Develop film about your project and have it distributed by a national organization in your subject area.

6. Develop a manual for the various people who will make awareness presentations and/or conduct training on your program. This manual helps maintain a degree of consistancy.

7. Develop large display pictures illustrating participants in your project, a summary of test results, and a matrix showing specific skills taught.

8. Develop and use form letters to meet various communication needs.

9. Develop a comprehensive set of materials which can supply detailed answers to questions about the project. (for example: training, evaluation, resource materials, technical assistance, monitoring, reporting, etc.)

10. Develop a "DD newsletter" for your adopters, SFs and Other interested persons.

11. Develop a follow-up workshop video-tape with an audio-tape feedback mechanism.

12. Develop "kits" for teacher inservice, including forms to be used.

13. Publish an adopter's manual/handbook, include sample materials, installation plan, and management information.

14. Develop a proposal for obtaining university graduate credit for completing training in your project. Send to appropriate teacher education institutions in your subject area.

C. Disseminating information

1. After receiving a request for information, send out two responses: 1) information requested by the persons, and 2) a response informing the appropriate State Facilitator of the person's interest. A local SF follow-up may just trigger an adoption.

2. Mail multiple copies to SFs of awareness brochures, summary of services project can offer to adopters, and other special information, such as, the purchase or loan of a film.

3. Send a complete set of program materials to State Facilitators. Potential adopters use these materials by borrowing or by reviewing them at the SFs' office resource room.

4. Write a personal letter to SF, focusing on a specific DD dissemination need. Plan carefully with SF and focus efforts in a specific geographic area. (i.e. School district, regional area or State).

5. Target awareness activities in untouched States. Cultivate relationships with State Facilitators. Give special attention to inquiries from States where there are no adoptions.

6. Use personal approach whenever possible personally meet each SF and local educational agencies at professional conferences.

7. When resources are limited, concentrate awareness conferences on surrounding states, notify various districts in the state of DDs traveling schedule.

8. Mail general information about your project to specific personnel who are currently working in your subject area.

9. Interface with appropriate agencies outside of USOE that have relevance to your subject area, for example, council on great city schools, center for Urban Environment, etc.

10. Interface with agencies within of USOE (Department of Education), for example, Title I, Career Education, and other programs that have relevance to your subject area. Caution: Do not interface with more than one organization within a funding period.

11. Mail to target populations materials such as, personal letters, brochures, funding announcements, USOE news releases, holiday greetings, and sample units.

12. Write an article to be submitted to professional journals in subject area of project.

13. When the sales of your materials are provided by other organizations, provide an automatic information system to obtain addresses. Contact by mail all persons who purchased the materials.

14. Provide workshops at teacher education institutions for potential teachers. Encourage teacher education to utilize program key elements where appropriate in their pre-service curriculum.

15. Contact State and professional organizations for making presentations about your project at their annual conferences. Do this well in advance of the proposed meeting.

16. Make follow-up contacts with letter, and or phone with persons who have expressed interest in the project.

17. Follow-up with personal contact whenever possible, especially when a district expresses an interest in the project.

D. Conducting Awareness Sessions

1. Conduct awareness Conferences, but make sure participants are teachers and administrators that have a need to improve in the areas presented.

2. Establish awareness conferences with only NDN programs. At least 75% of the participants should be teachers and administrators.

3. Establish awareness sessions targeted to a specific project or three to six developers with similiar or related subject areas.

4. Have DDs make 2 to 4 presentations (45min.) rather than a long (90 min.) presentation.

5. Personal contact at awareness sessions and training sessions prove to be the best diffusion strategy.

6. At awareness conferences, provide a block of time for participants to be free to discuss individual adoption problems with DSs - other than the "formal" presentation.

E. Training personnel

1. Develop a "standard" training plan. This helps insure that training presentations are consistent in format and emphasis. The standard provides a model for all certified trainers.

3. Reduce training time to minimum for an adequate preparation. Training time of more than 2-days presents staff release problems. Consider alternate approaches. (i.e. increased technical assistance, additional 1 to 2-day training periods spaced out in time, etc.)

4. Bring several potential adopters together for a single training period.

5. Wherever possible, conduct training at a demonstration site. Trainees are able to observe the demonstration site classrooms, and trainers are generally available.

6. Provide for a variety of training materials and presentation techniques involving active participation by trainees, such as, role playing, demonstrations, games, discussions, practical activities.

7. Take advantage of training sessions offered by TAB.

F. Using Certified Trainers

1. Have a written policy statement concerning your demonstration sites and certified trainers.

2. Develop a formal model training program to be used by all certified trainers.

3. Select potential certified trainers from persons who can get time off from their regular jobs. One of the main advantages of certified trainer is that a project can meet the demands of adopters beyond the time allotment available to the project staff. Disadvantages of certified trainers are: a) risk of damage (academic and physical) to the students if quality work is not performed, and 2) loss of reputation to the project and NDN.

4. Select and certify persons who can be trained to perform a specified function for the project, such as, presenting at awareness sessions, making on-site visits, providing follow-up services and conducting training.

5. Certify one person who is qualified to perform all programmatic functions, for example, initial awareness, training, follow-up, and technical assistance.

6. Train future certified trainers with an experienced trainer. Have future trainers participate as an assistance in training activities, prior to certification.

7. Provide "cross-training" in two DD programs that are similar so that one person can provide at least part of the training for the two programs.

8. Conduct periodically refresher training sessions for certified trainers.

9. Certify trainers only after they have had a successful teaching (operational) experience with the program.

10. Establish demonstration sites, or satellite centers in various parts of the country. Coordinate activities.

11. Develop a network of certified trainers within each region.

12. Coordinate all certified trainers from one location (i.e. the DD site).

G. Providing Technical Assistance/follow-up Activities

1. Send out a post-training letter and an "operational check list" to adopter districts. An analysis of the check list will permit the DD to determine readiness for technical assistance.

2. Use phone, letters, etc., to contact adopters frequently (every 2 months) to determine status. This needs to be done because the adopting administrator may leave, lead teacher may be assigned other duties, school district budget may change, Board of Education may put a change on inservice funding, etc.

3. Develop "standard" forms to collect follow-up monitoring information. One to be completed by the coordinator (general contact person) and the other by participating teachers.

4. On large or critical adoptions, combine talents of 2 or more NDN persons, (i.e. SF, DD, and resource consultant). Make personal contact with adopting personnel.

5. Allow time to visit classes and provide pertinent feedback to adopter. Between visits contact by mail or phone.

6. Return to adopter site to provide personal intervention (technical assistance) whenever possible.

H. Adopting/Adapting process

1. General steps in the adoption process:

a) Identify several districts with one school that has a receptive principal, a willing teacher, a support person (i.e. curriculum supervisor, librarian, counselor, etc.), and an acceptable faculty.

b) Train a cadre of personnel

c) Allow trained cadre to provide leadership in their district to acquaint administrators and teachers of the program

d) Enlist the cadre to provide orientation to all personnel on regular in-service days.

2. Specific action steps in the adoption process:

   a) get top administrative support

   b) get support from other curriculum areas under which the program may be offered

   c) gain support of building principal who will champion the adoption

   d) start efforts to clear committees which make determination in course offerings and catalog listings

   e) make sure grants management personnel have program as top priority for next go-around

   f) assist school personnel to locate funds, i.e. Title IV-C

   g) stay in contact with SF and SEA to coordinate all adopter's activities

3. Identify two certificated personnel to serve as adopter supervisors in adopter school. Suggest that one person be building principal and the other from the central administrative staff.

4. Encourage potential adopters to visit nearest demonstration school.

5. Identify one person in a school to act as program coordinator. Responsibilities include identification of participants, purchasing, preparation of materials, supplies, technical service, collection of evaluative data, monitoring and coordination of inservice activities.

6. Develop a linking process with certified trainers/consultants with potential adopters by exchanging names, addresses, telephone numbers, and personal visits. These people can then determine if a match can be made with the potential adopter and the DD's program.

7. Get a specific commitment or agreement from potential adopters to install your minimum requirements for adoption.

I. <u>Questionable Practices</u>

1. Regional awareness conferences appear to be less successful than awareness conferences involving only one state. (Larger school systems seem to be able to travel greater distances; but, even then, only one or two people can come to the meeting)

2. The least effective awareness meetings are those held where a large number of developer/demonstrators have been gathered to provide information.

3. Do not schedule awareness sessions too close to the beginning or end of the school year, or with other professional meetings.

4. Awareness sessions that do not have the proper participants, such as administrators who can make decisions, are not very productive.

5. Many facilitators choose the same dates (especially in in the fall) to have their awareness conferences. This presents a problem to the DD, even with certified trainers, to meet all the requests for presentations.

6. Schedule DD projects at awareness sessions so that all get at least one morning session, if possible. Afternoon sessions are not as desireable.

7. Evaluation forms used by SF after an awareness sessions are often not useful to the DDs. DDs refrain from using their own because of the burden on participants.

8. Too much time spent on awareness sessions cuts into time for training, monitoring, and evaluation activities. A balance must be maintained among the various functions.

9. Renting a booth at a "subject area" or related educational convention is not an effective approach to get adoptions.

10. The shot gun approach using mass mailings has not proved to be very successful.

11. General information letters about a DD program sent to a specific target group not in the subject area, such as, non-public school personnel, yield few responses.

12. Newspaper publicity yields very little response.

13. Presenting papers at local, regional, and national conventions is not a very productive way to get adoptions.

14. In training sessions, avoid the lecture technique of presentation and presenting information primarily with a single media such as overheads.

15. Avoid requesting too much paper work related to "information gathering" from trainees. They regard this as time taken away from training activities.

16. Avoid requesting too much paper work from adoption site personnel.

SUMMARY OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL DISSEMINATION/DIFFUSION STRATEGIES[1]

Successful dissemination strategies include:

- Clear, concise awareness materials
- Responsiveness to the needs of the client
- Prompt response to any letter or phone call
- Enthusiasm conveyed and sincere belief in the project's value
- Awareness presentations that clearly describe the project
- Having high calibre project personnel
- Good relationships with State Facilitators
- Respecting the client, locale, school setting, ideas, etc.
- Ability to communicate well and desire to grow in this skill
- Variety and balance in awareness and workshop presentations
- Openness and honesty in responding to questions
- Dealing with the concept of being an "expert" in humorous fashion
- Staff having a personal sense of humor
- Being sure that the audience knows the staff are educators and not book salesmen
- Following through with promises to clients
- Staff's experience in schools helps to identify with participants' concerns
- Attending to details and being well prepared
- Making an effort to become familiar with the geographic area, schools, community, etc. where working
- Working at modeling in a training session what is believed to be the desirable classroom environment for a successful implementation
- Having a positive national reputation that precedes the staff
- Growing ability to be flexible in responding to expressed needs

Unsuccessful dissemination strategies include:

- Staff trying to be something they are not
- Attempting to train groups that are too large
- Lackluster, unenthusiastic awareness sessions or workshop presentations
- Workshops that begin in late afternoon after the participants have worked all day
- Attempting to "satisfy" everyone in a workshop
- Involvement in a booth at conferences has not appeared to be very effective
- Participation in awareness conference where "decision makers" are not present
- Conducting training sessions with participants who had not been very well informed about what the project was all about
- Awareness/training that is part of a regional in-service day in which numerous other activities are happening concurrently

[1] Extracted from 1978-79 Final Report by John R. Rowe, Director "The New Model Me," Lakewood, Ohio